

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **CONTACT**

John Grassy, Public Information Officer  
Montana Dept. Natural Resources and Conservation  
(406) 444-0465



June 29, 2016

## **Nine counties move to drought alert status**

**HELENA, Mont.** – Lieutenant Governor Mike Cooney today said ten Montana counties – Carter, Carbon, Yellowstone, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Powell, Ravalli, Missoula and Sanders – have reached “Drought Alert” status, as defined by the Montana Drought Response Plan and state statute.

These ten counties join the four counties already identified under drought alerts in June – Glacier, Pondera, Teton, and northern Lewis and Clark.

In a letter to county commissioners, Cooney noted the determination was based on water supply and soil moisture data from the Natural Resources and Conservation Service, the National Agricultural Statistics Service, and other state and federal agencies, along with the Palmer Drought Severity Index and Surface Water Supply Index.

Cooney, who chairs the Governor’s Drought and Water Supply Advisory Committee, said the region has experienced two consecutive years of low snowpack, early runoff and minimal subsoil moisture. Despite mid-July rains, the previous monthly precipitation totals west of the divide and in the south-central and south-east portions of the state area were in the 35-43% of normal.

The “Drought Alert” designation does not carry any official status with respect to state or federal disaster assistance programs. Rather, “it is intended to give high visibility to the continuing impacts of drought in affected areas and to prompt communication among stakeholders,” Cooney wrote.

At the upcoming meeting of the Governor's Drought and Water Supply Advisory Committee on August 18, committee members will assess the latest water supply, soil and climate conditions across the state. More counties could be added to "Drought Alert" status at that time, and some areas could be declared in Severe Drought.

For more information on current drought and water supply conditions, visit [drought.mt.gov](http://drought.mt.gov).

#####